



## PRESS RELEASE

### U.S. GOVERNMENT ASSISTS TSUNAMI VICTIMS IN SOMALIA

*Nairobi, January 4, 2004* – U.S. Ambassador to Kenya William M. Bellamy announced this week that the United States Government, through the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), has provided \$50,000 to meet the immediate humanitarian needs of those affected by the Indian Ocean tsunami in coastal Somalia.

USAID's Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance (USAID/OFDA) has channeled the funds through the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) to provide family relief kits, safe drinking water, and emergency medical supplies to thousands of Somalis affected by the tsunami disaster, which caused the most damage along a 650-kilometer stretch of coast between the island of Hafun in northeastern Bari Region, and the village of Garacad in Mudug Region. UNICEF, along with other U.N. agencies and non-governmental organization (NGO) partners, has conducted rapid assessments of humanitarian needs, and has already begun delivering supplies to the tsunami victims.

The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UN OCHA) reports that the effects of the tidal waves are still being measured in Somalia, given that the affected areas are remote and inaccessible. It estimated that as of January 3, approximately 18,000 households comprising 54,000 people were affected, and that 150 deaths had been registered so far. Homes and fishing boats were destroyed, shallow wells were buried, and livelihoods have been threatened. UN OCHA reports that the lack of food, water and shelter is causing an upsurge in diarrhoeal cases and respiratory infections.

The tsunami disaster has come at a time when 1.2 million people across Somalia are already suffering the effects of an ongoing humanitarian emergency caused by civil strife, drought and food insecurity. The U.S. Government is the largest bilateral donor to Somalia, and currently funds several humanitarian relief programs in the country. USAID/OFDA provided \$4,274,262 for emergency humanitarian relief Fiscal Year 2004 alone, and since 1990, the U.S. Government has provided more than \$476 million to Somalia for humanitarian assistance activities.